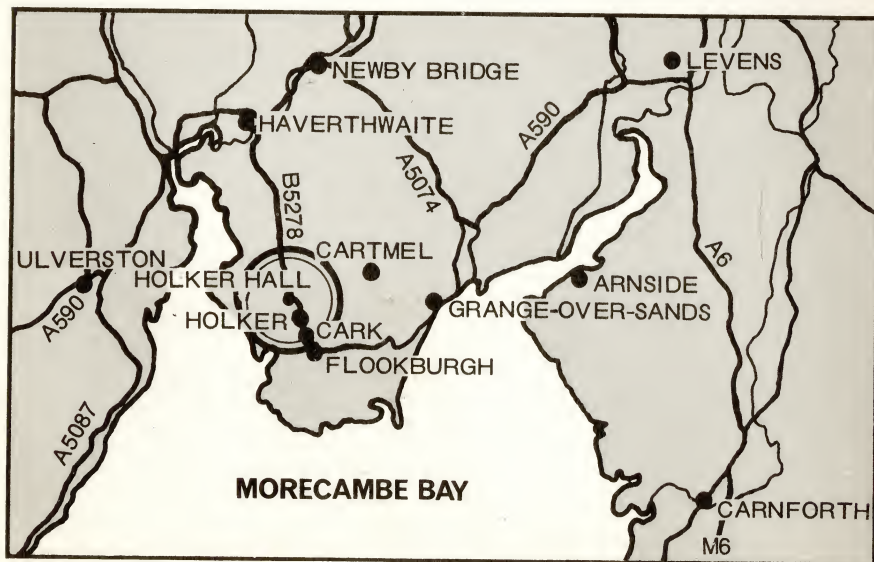


THE DEER OF HOLKER

A photograph of four spotted deer with large antlers standing in a green field. The deer are facing forward, and their antlers are prominent. The background is a lush green field with trees in the distance.

Holker Hall
Nr. Grange Over Sands





Holker Deer Parks

Front Cover: FALLOW DEER

Back Cover: RED DEER

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NEW AND OLD WING FROM THE PARK

THE DEER OF HOLKER

Deer are a notable feature of the north west of England. All four of the major breeds may be found at Holker; Fallow and Sika in the Deerpark at Holker Hall, Red and Roe in the Old Park enclosure.

Red deer and Sika comprise stags, hinds and calves, Fallow deer and Roe – bucks, does and fawns. Stags and bucks shed their antlers in spring, growing larger each year during the summer until maturity, after which the antlers degenerate. During the period of growth the antlers are covered with skin, known as velvet, which is shed on completion. In the rut, the mating season, herding deer, whether Red, Fallow or Sika, wrestle to establish seniority after which they mark out and maintain their territories and groups of females.

After the rut the stags and bucks are in reduced condition and may require hay if the weather is unfavourable. During the late winter this feeding may have to be continued and for heavy antler growth artificial feeding in April and May is practised in some deerparks.

At Holker conditions are kept as near as possible to those in the wild, feeding being limited to hay and mangolds in the hardest weather only. The deer may not be the largest you may have seen but they are certainly extremely attractive.



FALLOW DEER

FALLOW (Dama Dama)

The Holker Fallow herd, numbering about a hundred, dates back to 1730. There has been no record of any change since their introduction. They are of the Menil type – spotted both in summer and winter. There are a number of other colour types including the Common with a chestnut back with white spots, the Black, the White and the Blue. This last is an iron grey in colour.

The fawns are born in June and July, usually single, twins being very rare. For the first few days the fawns are hidden in bushes and clumps of long grass but they are soon out following the does and playing in large nursery groups. Fallow does have a tremendous capacity for reproduction and longevity and one has been observed with a fawn each year from her fourth year to her twenty-seventh year.

For most of the year does and young bucks live in large parties while the mature bucks remain in a separate group.

At the beginning of the Rut, the older bucks establish their seniority, after which in late October they each have their territory and group of does. The younger bucks attempt to lure away some of the does but it is an interesting and human feature of the Fallow doe that it is the one that chooses the buck. During the Rut the bucks make a rather fast

grunting sound. Although not loud, the sound can carry a long way in still weather.

Young bucks with their first head are known as prickets, having small spikes. As they age bucks' antlers become palmated, being wide and flattened at the top, this becoming more pronounced each year to maturity.

The bucks are pugnacious but the mature seldom injure each other. The damage is done by the prickets who sometimes sneak in and can butt with their needlelike antlers bucks whose attention is focused elsewhere.

The herd is usually led by an old doe which will have developed cunning with age. Fallow are nervous deer and will take flight if approached directly. The Fallow, in company with the Sika, graze the park throughout the year. Only in the most severe weather is it necessary to feed them. The trees and undulations in the ground provide shelter from the worst of weather. During the summer the park is shared with cattle and sheep from the farm and the separate groups contribute to the peaceful pastoral scene.

SIKA DEER





SIKA DEER

FORMOSAN SIKA (*Cervus Nippon Taiouanus*)

A recent introduction to Holker from Woburn. Two stags and three hinds arrived in February 1970. The Formosan Sika is one of four species to have been kept in Deer Parks in England, the other three being Japanese, Manchurian and Pekin Sika. The summer coat is a reddish brown with pale spots. The winter coat is much darker and is more grey brown, the spots being not so noticeable.

The Sika calf is born in July and after being hidden for a few days is soon following the hind.

The stag does not have such impressive antlers as Red deer, the normal adult having eight points, four on each antler. During growth the antlers are covered with red velvet which is very conspicuous. This is not cleaned off until September. The Rut takes place in October and November. During the Rut the Sika Stag makes a peculiar whistling sound which can change to a high pitched scream.

Individual wild Sika Stags in the Lake District have interbred with Red Hinds giving rise to hybrids that are a cause for concern to some naturalists. The Sika that you will see at Holker are less nervous than the Fallow Deer and form a charming group, more rugged than the Fallow, more graceful than Red Deer. During the summer they are frequently found in company with the Fallow although there is no recorded case of interbreeding.

ROE DEER (*Capreolus Capreolus*)

Roe Deer are the smallest species of deer to be found on the Estate and by far the most numerous. They are not confined by wall or fence, but are free to roam at will. They will be found in most woods in the district.

The Rut takes place in late July and early August and provided that the numbers of bucks and does are equal they are monogamous and bucks fight savagely for a particular doe. Throughout the Rut and afterwards a couple will seldom be far apart. Roe kids are born in May and June. Usually two are produced, sometimes one, triplets being comparatively rare.

The summer coat is short and a foxy red on the back and flanks. The under side is a pale sandy colour. In winter the coat or pelage is grown in September and October and is much longer than the summer coat. The colour is greyish or dark brown. The most noticeable feature of the winter coat is the large white patch on the rump. This is often the first and last thing you will see when out in the woods in winter.

The buck casts his antlers in November when new antlers grow

ROE DEER FAWN





ROE DEER

immediately and are covered with brown velvet, which is cleaned off in March and April. This cleaning is done against trees and bushes, frequently stripping the bark. In consequence Roe Deer, and in particular young bucks, are unpopular with foresters. A typical Roe buck will carry antlers of six points, three on each side.

Roe stand about 24 to 26 inches at the shoulder and weigh some 30 to 55 lbs. The weight can vary greatly depending on the sex, does can be some 10 to 15 lbs. less than the bucks. It also depends on the condition of the animal and the quality of feeding available. Bucks have been known to weigh over 70 lbs. but this is exceptional.

Roe Deer are timid animals and prefer to live in dense woodland where the cover is thick, hence their liking for young conifer plantations. They can be found feeding at dawn and dusk in clearings, rides and the margins of woods. When alarmed Roe bark like a dog. Younger Roe, in particular yearlings, tend to bark more frequently and the bark is higher pitched.

Roe are attractive but elusive animals and visitors will be fortunate if they see them.



RED DEER

RED DEER (*Cervus Elaphus*)

The Red Deer at Holker are the latest introduction, arriving in the autumn of 1970. They are the largest deer on the Estate. A large Park Stag can stand up to fifty inches at the shoulder and have been recorded elsewhere to weigh over thirty stone. Old Park is particularly suitable for the Red Deer since their natural habitat is woodland in which conditions, particularly on limestone, they achieve substantial weight and good antler growth having a mixed diet of grass, shrubs and tree shoots.

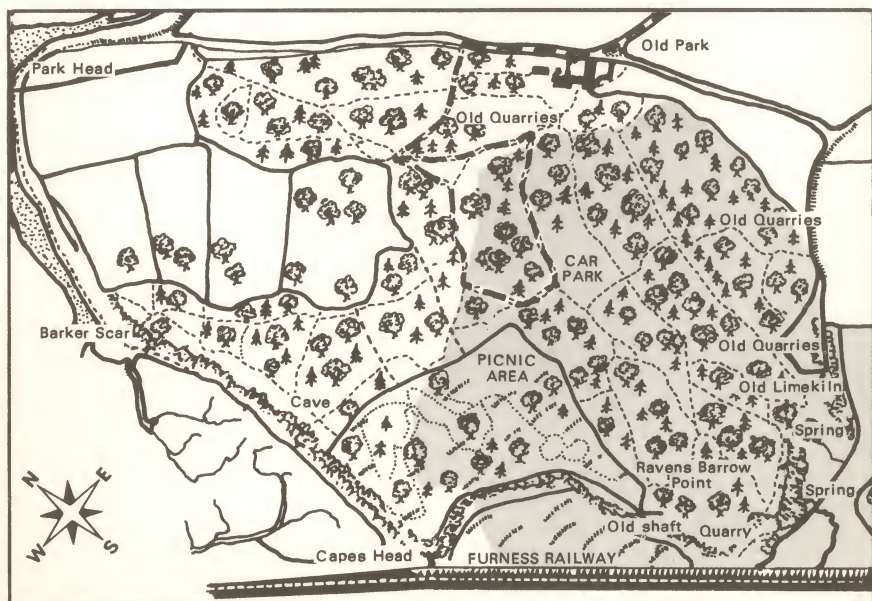
The Red Deer in the Highlands were originally woodland creatures but were driven up to the more remote areas by pressures of agriculture. Weight and antler growth vary enormously. Highland stags will seldom have more than fourteen points and they will be considerably lighter both in body and antler than the massive growth of some woodland and park stags. A stag of the same breeding as those in the Park has produced a head showing forty-seven points.

Red calves are born in June, twins being very rare. When they are born the calves are covered with white spots, a great aid to concealment in wooded country.

The Red Deer stag sheds its antlers in March and the new antlers complete their growth in a period of four months. Occasionally a stag will not grow antlers due to some hormonal disturbance and he is known as a hummel. Due to the fact that the hummel does not use its reserves for antler growth, the size and weight are frequently greater than an antlered stag.

The Rut takes place in late September and October, but as with the Rut of other species it can vary with the area, and weather conditions can prolong or curtail activities. The mature stags predominate at first, often collecting many hinds which they attempt to hold in a harem. Later the younger stags lure some away while the older ones fight for possession. During the Rut the stags utter a grunting roar which is a wonderful sound when heard on a still day.

The summer coat of the Red is a reddish brown. In winter the coat is longer and darker with a touch of grey and at that season it is difficult to understand the name. The stag is most impressive in both size and appearance growing a mane on its neck when mature. While during the Rut the stag is master, for the remainder of the year the real leader is usually an old hind, once again the human parallel.





FAMILY AFFECTION